



# JEWISH COMMUNITY OF THE HILL COUNTRY

March—April, 2025



## Passover

The Jewish Community of the Hill Country is happy to announce the celebration of its annual Passover Seder will take place on Saturday, April 12, 2025 at 6:00pm in the Crockett Room of the YO Ranch Hotel and Conference Center, 2033 Sidney Baker Street, Kerrville, Texas.

Dinner will be the hotel's buffet; according with our agreement, ordering off menu is not possible. The weekend buffet is all-inclusive and offers multiple entrees

(beef, chicken and fish) with several side dishes, salads, soups and desserts, with coffee and tea—enough variety to please everyone. The price will be about \$40.00, including tip and tax. Most Shuls charge more than the cost of food and service but we do not.

More information will be forthcoming and will be shared with you as we get closer to the event. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.



## Shabbat Services

Friday, March 14, 2025 at 6:00pm (Purim)

Friday, March 28, 2025 at 6:00pm

Friday April 11, 2025 (No Service)

Friday April 25, 2025 at 6:00pm



## Torah Study

Saturday, March 8, 2025, 11:30am to 1:00pm

Saturday, March 22, 2025, 11:30am to 1:00pm

Saturday, April 5, 2025, 11:30am to 1:00pm

Saturday, April 19, 2025, 11:30am to 1:00pm

## The Survivor Torah

by

Bryan Fishbach



*Halina "Nadi" Nadel Lasch added the Hebrew letter "vav" in honor of her father, Moshe.*

The Survivor Torah story begins in 1939 in the tiny northeastern Polish village of Filipów. At the time, the village's Jews were being rounded up by the Nazis to be deported to Treblinka extermination camp. In a last-minute effort to save the community's Torah, the town's rabbi handed the Torah to his non-Jewish neighbor, Tomasz Wróblewski, a shepherd. The rabbi's directions were simple: Hide this Torah

until his return or give it to another Jew who would know what to do with it. The rabbi, along with most of the Jewish population of Filipów, was murdered in Treblinka.

The Wróblewski family kept the Torah hidden under their couch for 75 years. They didn't know what it was, let alone its sacredness. So over the years, parts of the Torah were sliced away by the family and used for ordinary things like making a

handbag and insoles for shoes, and then back under the couch it went.

But in 2015, the Torah would emerge from hiding because of Jonny Daniels, the British-Israeli founder of the nonprofit *From the Depths*. Daniels connected with the Torah when volunteers with his organization went to Filipów as part of their mission to find lost Jewish cemeteries in Eastern Europe.

The student volunteers from University of Warsaw had been going door-to-door asking villagers about any remnants of Jewish gravestones they may know of. When they knocked on the door of the Wróblewski home, an elderly couple brought them in, thinking that they were the Jews he'd been awaiting for 76 years. The students, however, weren't Jewish, and the Wróblewski's said they could only tell their secret to a Jew. So the students returned with Daniels.

"The shepherd lifted up the sofa, and lying on the floor was half of the Torah; it was a shocking sight," Daniels told *The Journal*. Rather than bury the damaged Torah, as Jewish law dictates, Daniels saw a much bigger mission for it. "This Torah really is the last survivor from this village. All the Jews from Filipów were taken to Treblinka and killed, but this Torah survived. Now, our opportunity was to bring it back to life."

Thus began the Survivor Torah Project, Daniels' initiative to restore the Torah by having Holocaust survivors from around the world fill in the missing letters. The Torah was ripped from the end of Leviticus onward, so there's quite a bit to go — over 100,000 letters remain to be written.

"This Torah is being refilled by the very people who survived," Daniels said.

To keep the letters looking uniform, Daniels has a Torah *Sofer* (scribe) outline each of the letters. The process of filling in the letters can take several forms. Most often, the survivor is holding Daniels' arm as he puts the letters onto the parchment.

"They're holding onto me, which also allows women to be involved in as well, and to have this as a Torah that is accepted by everybody," Daniels said. Daniels has done the process with Orthodox Jewish woman who won't hold onto his arm, but may hold the end of the feather quill or sit next to and he writes the letter on their behalf.

Since its rediscovery, the Survivor Torah has traveled with him to several countries, including Sweden, Denmark, Mexico, Germany and Poland. Just recently, Daniels drove to a remote town in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania to meet with a Holocaust survivor who lives there alone. In fact, finding Holocaust survivors living their lives in solitude is all-too-common. Daniels said how, during a visit to Los Angeles in 2023, he sat with a Holocaust survivor for three-and-a-half hours at her home in Beverly Hills.

"She was completely alone, not willing to leave her house," Daniels said. "But when I brought the Torah to her, it was like she was reconnecting with her past, with her family, with her faith." So far, over 600 Holocaust survivors from around the world have participated in the restoration of the Torah. This past year, the Torah crossed the equator for the first time, traveling to Brazil. Daniels met survivors in São Paulo, South America's second-most Jewish city.

"When we brought the Torah to Brazil, the reaction from the survivors was overwhelming," Daniels said. "Many of them had never heard of the project before, and they were so touched to be part of something that connects them directly to their own history and to Jews around the world." It's always in Daniels' possession, stowed in a thick, locked briefcase wherever he goes. As an Israel Defense Forces veteran, Daniels is confident in being its protectorate. And it's never, ever checked baggage on an airplane.

It's often an occasion where survivors and their families make an entire event out of the moment—even when the arrangements are made at the last minute.

"Suddenly the grandkids are wearing the suits and the great-grandkids, these little beautiful Jewish children over there in their best clothes—they understand the beauty and significance of this for their family member," Daniels said.

"And the survivors get a level of closure, conversation and connection. It gives them a level of comfort in what has been a very difficult year for Holocaust survivors who are re-seeing images of Jew hatred that they haven't seen since the 1930s."

## The Way We Were . . .

Passover is approaching rapidly; we will celebrate it on April 12th. Let's harken back to the early days of the JCHC and take a look at Esther Jordan's scrapbook. Below are photos from the April 18, 1984 *Kerroville Mountain Sun* of our second public Seder on April 16, 1984. (The *Kerroville Mountain Sun* was purchased by the *Kerroville Daily Times* in 2003.)



AT THE HEAD TABLE for the traditional Passover Supper Monday night at St. Peter's Episcopal Church are Reverend and

Mrs. Marvin Bond, Dr. Hy Miller, and Mr. and Mrs. Dan Steichen.

Photo by Jim Rickhoff

Kerroville Mountain Sun

April 18, 1984

"He brought us out of Egypt,  
divided the Red Sea,  
and sustained us for forty years  
in the desert.  
He fed us with manna,  
gave us the Torah through Moses,  
and led us into Israel.  
Blessed be the Lord!"



ELIJAH'S PLATTER, displayed by Lynn Lampert at the Jewish Community's Sedar supper Monday night. Each of the foods displayed have a symbolic role in the service as well as providing the dinner.

Photo by Jim Rickhoff